NATION

ED seizes assets worth Rs 1,023 cr in Goa

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BUSINESS

India boosts Russia, UAE oil purchases in June

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SPORTS

Ueda scores twice in Japan's 4-0 win against Tunisia

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 22 JUNE 2026 | MONDAY | BENGALURU | 6 MUHARRAM 1448 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 161 | Pages: 8

SALAR UPCLOSE

'Education must for India to be a superpower'

Resilience is his USP (unique selling proposition). After his defeat in the Bengaluru Central Lok Sabha election in 2024, which he had almost won, newly elected **Congress Rajya Sabha MP Mansoor Ali Khan** worked to encash his defeat by exposing alleged electoral fraud under the popularly coined term vote chori. Consequently, the Bengaluru Central Lok Sabha constituency became the first case study for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to turn it into a movement.

In his first exclusive interview to the media after getting elected to the Rajya Sabha, Khan shares his thoughts with Naheed Ataulla for **Salar Upclose** on the National Education Policy, irregularities in competitive examinations, the Special Intensive Revision, and the takeaways from his father, former Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, K Rahman Khan.

>>>Read on Page 5

20L students retake NEET after paper leak

Aspirants say Physics test was toughest, Chem moderate; pin hopes on lower cut-off

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

More than 20 lakh medical aspirants took a second shot at the NEET (UG) examination on Sunday after the original test was cancelled over paper leaks. Candiadtes reported that the paper was comparatively tougher than the previous exam, with Physics emerging as the most challenging section.

While Biology was generally described as easy and chemistry as moderate, many students said the Physics section was lengthy and time-consuming, and a lower cut-off may be expected.

In Delhi, a candidate described the examination as "moderate" but said Physics was lengthier and more difficult than in the previous test. Similar views were echoed by aspirants in Bengaluru, Chennai and Ranchi, who said Biology was comparatively easier, Chemistry moderate and Physics the most challenging section.

A candidate in Bengaluru said Physics was difficult but the additional time to read and solve questions proved helpful. In Chennai, aspirant Tarun said the paper was tougher than the previous attempt, while a candidate in Ranchi termed the examination "easy to moderate".

A security official removes a NEET-UG candidate's nose ring before she enters the examination centre in Bengaluru on Sunday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

In Madhya Pradesh, however, a candidate said the paper was "good" and that arrangements this time were far better. "While it felt unusual to have to take the exam again, there was also a sense of confidence and hope as the re-test offered another chance of selection," the aspirant said.

In Srinagar, a candidate said the paper was good overall despite Physics being challenging.

Special arrangements were made for several candidates. In Kolkata, Shrishti Dubey, who suffered severe injuries in a road accident on 14 June, was allowed to appear for the examination in a separate room with medical support and a standby ambulance.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) said the re-examination was conducted across 5,440 centres in India and 14 overseas centres in 13 languages, including Hindi and English.

NTA Director General Abhishek Singh said a "whole-of-government approach" helped conduct the mammoth exercise in a record 37 days. Around seven lakh personnel, including police teams, observers and examination staff, were deployed. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 4 & 5

MAN SHOWS 'LEAKED' PAPER ON VIDEO CALL

AJMER, 21 JUNE

Police in Ajmer have launched a probe after a National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) aspirant in the city received a video call from an unknown number that claimed to have question papers for the 21 June re-examination. The caller reportedly showed the candidate what looked like a NEET question paper and demanded Rs 30,000 in exchange for it.

The complaint was filed by former DAV College Students' Union president and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) member Krishna Singh Thakur, who claimed that a first-year student of DAV College received the call.

Thakur said he received the same call, and was provided with a phone number for an online transaction. He has provided a recording of the call to the police.

Additional SP (City) Himanshu Jagid said a police team had begun to investigate the complaint. —*Salar News*

Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir shakes hand with US' VP JD Vance as Pakistan's PM Shehbaz looks on in Switzerland, on Sunday —*PTI*

US will transform ties with Iran: Vance

ZURICH, 21 JUNE

Ahead of a high-stakes meeting with Iran in Switzerland with the mediation of Islamabad and Doha, US Vice President JD Vance on Sunday said that America is prepared to "funda-mentally transform" its long-strained ties with Tehran, if the Islamic Republic is "willing to give up being a driver of regional instability," and shun nuclear weapons ambitions.

He further said that President Donald Trump remains fully dedicated to a comprehensive cessation of hostilities across the region.

These technical-level negotiations are operating under a 14-point Memorandum of Under-standing (MoU) finalised on 17 June by President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"Trump asked us to 'turn over a new leaf' to transform our relationship with the people of Iran," Vance explained, sketching out a strategic vision of mutual cooperation aimed at yielding long-term economic and security dividends.

He was expected to meet with Teh-ran's negotiators, including parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

However, Vance added that Iran has been a destablising force in the region.

Before the talks started, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also addressed the press in the presence of Vance and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, saying he hoped for "very productive results" for the talks, and praising both US President Donald Trump and Iranian leaders.

Meanwhile Qatar's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying additional monitoring bod-ies and follow-up groups are in place to cover every part of the MoU. —*Agencies*

>>>More on Page 6

Will Starmer quit as UK bats for Andy as PM?

LONDON, 21 JUNE

Keir Starmer has come under mounting pressure to resign as the leader of the Labour Party to pave the way for Andy Burnham to take over as the new British Prime Minister.

Burnham's decisive victory against a looming far-right threat from Nigel Farage's Reform UK in the Makerfield byelection in northern England earlier this week strengthened his claim to the top job.

While Starmer has been steadfast in his commitment to contest any leadership challenge, the growing voices of dissent from within his own cabinet have triggered speculation around his exit from 10 Downing Street as early as next week.

"I was elected with a considerable mandate to serve the country at a general election two years ago," Starmer told reporters on Saturday. —*PTI*

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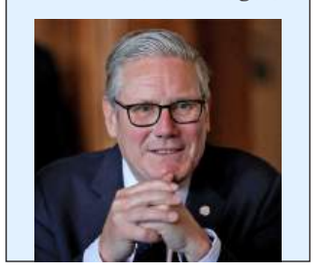


BENGALURU'S YOGA SPIRIT

Citizens perform yoga in front of Vidhana Soudha to mark the 12th International Yoga Day celebrations in Bengaluru on Sunday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

—*PTI*

Hariprasad assumes charge as KPCC Chief

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Senior Congress leader BK Hariprasad formally assumed charge as Karnataka Congress president at a mega convention on Sunday. At the ceremony, Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who had served as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president since 2020, formally handed over charge to Hariprasad by presenting him with the party flag. The 71-year-old MLC was appointed Karnataka Congress president on 3 June, following Shivakumar's resignation as KPCC chief. An OBC leader from the Billava community, Hariprasad, was re-elected to the Karnataka Legislative Council on Thursday. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 2

CBSE ANNOUNCES CLASS 12 RE-EVALUATION RESULTS

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday announced the re-evaluation results for Class 12 students who had applied for verification and re-evaluation of their board examination answer sheets, declaring over 87 per cent of the applications in the first phase.

Students can check their revised marks on the official portal and DigiLocker using their login credentials.

The board had declared the Class 12 results on 13 May for around 17.69 lakh candi-dates.

Students could obtain scanned copies of their answer books between 19 May and 25 May and apply for verification or re-evaluation from June 2 to June 7.

The post-result services platform operated under the supervision of experts from the Digital India Corporation, IIT Kanpur and IIT Madras, CBSE said.

The re-evaluation results come amid controversy over the board's newly introduced On-Screen Marking (OSM) system after some students alleged that scanned answer sheets uploaded by CBSE did not match their handwriting, raising concerns over possible mismatches during the digitisation process. —*PTI*

INDIA GETS 3 NEW NAVAL SHIPS

KOLKATA, 21 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday commissioned three indigenously built naval ships at the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port here – stealth frigate Dunagiri, survey vessel Sanshodhak and anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft Agray. The vessels were designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and built by Kolkata-based Defence PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd.

'Dunagiri,' the fifth ship of Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) frigates, is endowed with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, including BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles and the Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile system. P17A ships are fitted with an advanced weapon and sensor suite as compared to the P17 (Shivalik-class). The ship is named after the former INS Dunagiri (F-36), which served the nation from May 1977 until October 2010.

'Dunagiri,' the fifth ship of Nilgiri-class frigates, is endowed with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors —*PTI*

The ministry on Friday said 'Sanshodhak', the fourth Survey Vessel (Large), is designed for coastal and deep-water hydrographic surveys and collection of oceanographic and geophysical data for defence and civil applications, and is equipped with Autonomous Underwater Vehicles and Remotely Operated Vehicles.

'Agray', the fourth of the Arnala-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft, is equipped with lightweight torpedoes, indigenous rocket launchers, and shallow-water sonar systems to detect and engage underwater threats in littoral waters, it added.

Modi said Indian enterprises, engineers and workers were heavily involved in the construction of the three naval platforms, with more than 200 MSMEs participating. —*PTI*

AMMONIA LEAK AT SEAFOOD UNIT

TN gas leak: Govt says 2 dead, cops claim 7

THIRUVALLUR, 21 JUNE

Two women died after being affected by a major ammonia gas leak at a private seafood processing unit in Kannigaipair village near Periyapalayam in Thiruvallur district on Sunday, officials said.

Police had initially stated that seven people had died, but a release from the Chief Minister's Office and Health Minister KG Arunraj later clarified that the death toll stood at two.

A total of 64 workers on duty, 60 women and four men, were affected by the leak and rushed to nearby hospitals. Thiruvallur District Collector S Kavitha said 46 patients were admitted to Vels Hospital and 21 to Venkateshwara Hospital. Nine critically ill patients were later shifted by ambulance to Government Stanley Medical College Hospital in Chennai.

NDRF personnel carry out rescue at a seafood export unit following an ammonia gas leak, in Tamil Nadu's Thiruvallur district on Sunday —*PTI*

Arunraj said the scale of the ammonia leak was unprecedented in the state. "Doctors say we haven't seen cases with such high levels anywhere else," he told reporters.

The ammonia leak reportedly originated from the seafood processing unit and spread across the premises. Many workers complained of breathing difficulties, while a few suffered bleeding from the mouth and nose.

Police said around 120 migrant workers, including women from Assam, Odisha and Jharkhand, were staying on the factory premises, where accommodation had been provided by the company. The incident occurred on the unit's weekly holiday.

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay announced a solatium of Rs 2 lakh each to the families of the deceased and ordered a three-member committee to submit an interim report within 24 hours and a final report within three days. —*PTI*

After retest, NEET aspirants hope nothing goes wrong again

K'taka students retake exam with heavy hearts amid tight security

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Tight security arrangements were maintained with heavy deployment of police personnel in Karnataka on Sunday afternoon, with candidates and locals alike hoping for the smooth conduct of the examination.

The usual excitement of first-time NEET aspirants was missing. "The enthusiasm of writing NEET for the first time is not there now," students said. Many arrived with anxiety, fearing fresh confusion or irregularities.

Locals observed that the students who were writing the exam were praying that nothing goes wrong, noting that the uncertainty had left the aspirants distressed.

Students said they have worked hard and undergone training throughout the year. They appealed to the government to conduct the exam with strict security so that their efforts are not wasted.

The exam was rescheduled due to alleged "paper leak". The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the case, has made several arrests. CBSE students had also faced problems related to the re-evaluation process of their board exams.

Students prepare at the SJR College, one of the NEET centres in the City, before writing the exam amid tight security over the paper leak, in Bengaluru on Sunday —*Mohammed Asad*

Denied entry, City students break down

Several students were recorded crying outside NEET exam centres after allegedly being denied entry for coming late. Videos showed distressed students standing outside the gates of Government Ramnarayan Chellaram College on Palace Road, Bengaluru, and crying. Videos also show students attempting to climb the gates of some centres. —AGENCIES

The security arrangement, therefore, had been increased massively.

Across the State, jammers, CCTV cameras and frisking arrangements had been put in place, while invigilators and security personnel had been briefed ahead of the examination, officials said.

In Kalaburagi, among other places, CRPF personnel were deployed.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar wished the students best of luck, adding that "I am hopeful that the (Union) government has learned a lesson."

Home Minister Priyank Kharge assured that the State government had taken proactive measures to ensure the smooth conduct of the exam. "I am hopeful that the Central Government will also do its duty".

LINK PUC MARKS TO ENSURE FAIRNESS

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge suggested that Class 12 (PUC) marks also be considered along with NEET scores to ensure fairness to students. He also said that Karnataka's CET model b e examined.

Further, he charged that RSS members were being placed in key positions such as teachers and vice-chancellors to change the education system and misguide students. —*Agencies*

JD(S), farmers take padayatra against Bidadi township

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

The JD(S) along with a large number of farmers and villagers held a foot march near Bidadi against the proposed GBIT project on Sunday.

The "Namma Bhoomi, Namma Hakku" (Our Land, Our Right) march, led by the party's Youth Wing State President Nikhil Kumaraswamy, began at Anchipura village and passed through eight villages including Bannigiri, Mareve gowdanadoddi, Gundutopu, Gollahalli, Kodipalya before concluding at Hosur.

The Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT), projected as India's "first AI-powered integrated township", is expected to cover a total of 7,481 acres across nine villages in and around Bidadi. The government recently issued a final notification for the acquisition of 499 acres across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks, despite farmers protesting against Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's ambitious project for over 470 days.

The government has also floated a Rs 26-crore tender to appoint a consultant for preparing the master plan, DPR and providing project management services.

Addressing the gathering ahead of the 11-km march, Nikhil said: "JD(S)'s support for farmers is not limited to speeches. Nothing can be achieved through a one-day march; this is just the beginning".

He said that 95 per cent of the farmers are unwilling to part with their land, whereas Shivakumar has claimed that 80 per cent have agreed to accept compensation. The land price has been fixed at Rs 2.30 crore per acre. —*PTI*

JD(S) leader Nikhil Kumaraswamy marches across eight villages in and around Bidadi with farmers, on Sunday *X@Nikhil_Kumar_k*

BJP MLAs to take oaths at D'sthala over poll loss

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

State BJP President BY Vijayendra said the "betrayal" of some party MLAs who "cross-voted" in last week's MLC polls will be pursued to its logical end at a legislative party meet that will be held in Dharamasthala.

Speaking to press on Sunday, Vijayendra indicated that that BJP MLAs will be asked to make a 'Pramaana' (taking an oath/vow) before Lord Manjunatha (Shiva) there. Dharmasthala, on the banks of the Nethravati River in Dakshina Kannada district, has an 800-year-old history, and it is believed that anyone who utters a lie in front of Lord Manjunatha will face severe consequences.

This will likely happen next week, Vijayendra said adding that "However big we may be, we all believe in God".

The Shikaripura MLA said that 63 BJP legislators are under suspicion because of four cross-votes by MLAs.

Vijayendra, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka, and others, have already been summoned by BJP National President Nitin Nabin to New Delhi over the row.

The BJP has set up a fact-finding committee, headed by leaders CT Ravi, Mahesh Tenginakayi, and N Mahesh, to probe the issue.

₹50-100 cr for cross voting? BSY mulls HDK's intel

In response to a question on Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy reportedly claiming that JD(S) legislators were offered Rs 50-100 crore to cross-vote, State BJP President said he was not aware of the comments, but said that no one would have cross-voted for free. —PTI

Congress on Thursday won five of the seven Legislative Council seats that went to the polls, while the opposition BJP bagged two. The JD(S) failed to win the one seat it contested.

The Congress received 151 votes— 11 more than the expected 140 — sources said. —*PTI*

Hariprasad takes oath as KPCC President

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Senior Congress leader BK Hariprasad formally assumed charge as Karnataka Congress president at a mega convention here on Sunday. At the ceremony, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who had served as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president since 2020, formally handed over charge to Hariprasad by presenting him with the party flag.

Hariprasad said he was assuming "pious responsibility".

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, former chief minister Siddaramaiah, AICC General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala, ministers, legislators and party office-bearers attended the event.

Hariprasad, a 71-year-old MLC, was appointed Karnataka Congress president on 3 June, as Shivakumar became the CM.

An OBC leader from the Billava community, Hariprasad, was re-elected to the Karnataka Legislative Council on Thursday. He has previously served as a Member of the Rajya Sabha and as the AICC in-charge of Haryana and several other states.

Congress projected the event, held at Palace Grounds here, as the beginning of its campaign for a series of upcoming elections, including those for the five city corporations under the GBA, zilla and taluk panchayats, leading up to the 2028 Assembly elections.

Haripradad targeted the BJP and RSS, saying that they were "misusing constitutional bodies", and pointed to the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. He called them "anti-Constitution and anti-democracy".

STUDENT POLLS THIS YEAR

Shivakumar expressed confidence in Hariprasad, noting that they were classmates, and announced that student elections in colleges are likely this year, pending a Cabinet decision and Rahul Gandhi's guidance. —*Salar with agencies*

Congress leaders Randeep Singh Surjewala, Siddaramaiah, BK Hariprasad, Mallikarjun Kharge and CM DK Shivakumar during Hariprasad's swearing-in ceremony as the KPCC President at Palace Grounds , in Bengaluru, on Sunday; Minister Yathindra Siddaramaiah and Rajya Sabha member Mansoor Ali Khan —*Mohammed Asad*

Useless fellows, stop DK DK chants: Kharge loses his cool

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge blasted Congress workers who interrupted his speech during BK Hariprasad's swearing-in ceremony by chanting "DK DK". As CM DK Shivakumar quelled the chants, Kharge said "Be quiet... will it help the country if you shout here... useless fellows?" He said that the party comes first, and not any individual. He urged party workers to stop backing individual leaders, asking if the remaining workers have just come to "sweep". He noted that the meeting was being recorded and vowed disciplinary action. —ANI

Modi-Trump duo destroying India and the world: Kharge

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is destroying India, and US President Donald Trump is destroying the world, AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge charged on Sunday. And "both of them call themselves good friends", he said during BK Hariprasad's swearing in ceremony in Bengaluru.

Blaming Trump for rising fuel prices, he claimed, "India followed a policy of non-alignment since Nehru's time and maintained good relations with all countries. But that policy has been abandoned, and Modi, by going around calling everyone his friend and hugging them, has brought us to this situation."

Attacking the Modi-led government over inflation and unemployment, Kharge alleged that it was interested in concentrating power in the hands of a few people while neglecting the poor. "This Modi government will fall one day, wait and watch. A big trouble is coming for Modi."

On the Ram Temple trust in Ayodhya, Kharge said there were reports of Rs 5,000 crore of funds misused, and accused the BJP of embezzlement, while noting that Modi had inaugurated the temple. —*PTI*

Fire breaks out at Nagasandra Metro station; none hurt

BENGALURU, 21 JUNE

A minor fire incident occurred on Sunday at around 1.30pm near the emergency exit area of Nagasandra Metro Station, involving a signboard, a Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) official said.

The incident occurred at the metro station on the Green Line of Namma Metro. Thick smoke and flames were seen rising from a section of the station, alerting the commuters and residents in the surrounding area.

The operations and fire response teams immediately attended the site and promptly extinguished the fire. The situation is fully under control, officials added.

There has been no untoward incident and no disruption to Metro train services. —*ANI*

'EVEN KINGS LIKE YOGA'

Mysuru celebrates International Day of Yoga on a grand scale

MYSURU, 21 JUNE

Mysuru celebrated the 12th International Day of Yoga (IDY) with thousands participating in the main event held at the Mysuru Palace premises, and schools, colleges, and other institutions celebrating the event separately at more than 180 venues across Mysuru City.

Speaking at the main event organized by the District Administration, the Department of Ayush, the Mysuru Palace Board, the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports Affairs, the Department of School Education and Literacy and the Yoga Federation of Mysuru, Member of Parliament (MP) Yaduveer Krishnadutta Chamaraja Wadiyar urged people of all ages to practice yoga daily for better health to ward off stress and various lifestyle diseases.

Highlighting the contributions of Maharajas of Mysuru Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar in promotion of yoga, he said the erstwhile ruler went to Banaras and invited Yoga guru Krishnamacharya to teach yoga for Mysureans.

Yaduveer Krishnadutta Wadiyar also hailed the contributions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for popularising yoga at national and international level.

Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) T S Sritvatsa appreciated the 1200 yoga practitioners of the city for teaching the practice to the people.

District Ayush Officer Dr Renukadevi said this year's theme is Yoga for Healthy Ageing, highlighting the transformative power of the practice in preserving strength, balance and mental well-being as we grow older. —*Salar News*

Inmates perform yoga in B'luru prison

As part of the 12th International Yoga Day celebrations, over 4,000 inmates participated in a mass yoga session at the Central Prison, Parappana Agrahara, the Office of the Superintendent and Chief Superintendent said in a press release. —ANI

Clockwise from top; Hundreds of people do yoga at Mysuru Palace; volunteers perform breath-taking poses at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru; Health Minister UT Khader and Governor Thawarchand Gehlot also try some asanas. The celebrations, organised by the State government, mark the 12th International Yoga Day on Sunday —*Salar/Mohammed Asad*

ED summons Vijayan's daughter again in CMRL case

KOCHI, 21 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a fresh summons to Veena T, daughter of former Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, for questioning on June 29 in connection with a money laundering case involving CMRL and her now-defunct IT firm. This marks her second questioning; she was previously questioned for over nine hours on 17 June at the ED Kochi office. On 19 June, ED officials inspected her bank lockers in Thiruvananthapuram. The investigation focuses on payments of Rs 2.78 crore made by CMRL to Veena's firm, Exalogic Solutions, without services rendered. The ED alleges Veena and CMRL management generated proceeds of crime through these transactions —*PTI*

JD(U) reposes trust in Nitish, calls Nishant its future

PATNA, 21 JUNE

The JD(U) has lauded Nitish Kumar for a smooth power transfer in Bihar, stating they see their future in his son Nishant. After a meeting of the national council, the party confirmed Kumar's re-election as president and authorised him to establish a trust for managing party assets. The party praised Kumar's relinquishing of the CM post as a sign of political probity. Nishant, aged 44, is seen as the party's future, with senior leaders expressing confidence. The party also vowed to strengthen organisation, expand social media presence, and encourage youth involvement. The support base remains strong, with over one crore members. The party also highlighted the Centre's handling of West Asia and Nepal border issues, dismissing concerns over recent incidents as judicial inquiries are initiated. —*PTI*

Gehlot alleges bias against Islamic religious sites

JAIPUR, 21 JUNE

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has accused the state government of selectively targeting Muslim religious sites in border districts under the guise of an anti-encroachment drive. Gehlot made the allegations on Sunday, claiming that the action began after Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Bikaner in May. He stated that the focus of the drive was on demolishing the religious structures of Muslims, although some of them were decades old. Gehlot's statement suggests that the opposition is rising against the state government's handling of the issue, with potential implications for the administration's policies and relationships with various communities in Rajasthan. —*PTI*

Ram Temple SIT asks officials not to leave Ayodhya

AYODHYA, 21 JUNE

The SIT probing alleged fund misappropriation at the Ram Temple has instructed trust and temple officials not to leave Ayodhya. Sources stated investigators found discrepancies in documentation of gold, silver, and precious stones offered by devotees.

The SIT issued this directive before leaving for Lucknow. The investigation revealed irregularities during the Maha Kumbh Mela in early 2025, when the temple saw over 10 lakh daily visitors and donation boxes filled rapidly. Officials encountered unsatisfactory explanations from trust members regarding inventory and storage.

Daily digital reports are being prepared, and findings are being sent to the Chief Minister's Office. The probe also includes land purchases and procurement of building materials, amid political criticism over alleged inflated land rate —*PTI*

Dipke & CJP's protest at Jantar Mantar enters day 3

Dipke seeks support of farmers, NEET candidates

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

On the second day of the protest at Jantar Mantar, Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke sought farmers' support to the youth-led agitation over alleged examination irregularities, NEET paper leak and the demand for education minister's resignation.

He said students stood by farmers in the fight for their rights and need farmers' solidarity now.

The CJP founder has also appealed to people to reach Jantar Mantar, while asking NEET re-exam aspirants to join the agitation after completing their test.

"We are holding the fort but without your support this movement won't be successful," Dipke said.

While the protest drew hundreds of youths on Saturday, police made repeated announcements in the evening, asking those present to vacate the premises.

Police said the permission granted for the gathering had ended at 5 pm and continuation beyond the permitted hours was a violation of the conditions governing the permission and warned of legal action.

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke during a protest over alleged examination irregularities, repeated paper leaks and demands for accountability from the government in New Delhi on Saturday—*PTI*

Dipke and several other protesters, however, sat through the night and have continued the sit-in protest at Jantar Mantar, raising slogans for Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation.

Earlier, in a series of posts on X, Dipke appealed to police not to stop people from coming to Jantar Mantar, saying the protesters were not doing anything wrong and were only seeking justice for students who died by suicide.

Dipke said the protest would continue peacefully and reiterated his appeal for dialogue with the Centre, saying the channel for talks remained open if accountability was fixed and the education minister resigned.

Dipke has demanded a compensation of Rs 1 crore for the families of students who died by suicide following the paper leak and cancellation of the entrance examination.

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who joined the protest, had announced that he would go on a hunger strike on 27 June if Pradhan did not step down. —*PTI*

NATARAJAN ALLEGES BJP-ECI COLLUSION

HYDERABAD, 21 JUNE

Senior Congress leader Meenakshi Natarajan has accused the BJP and the Election Commission of collusion in the rejection of her Rajya Sabha candidature from Madhya Pradesh. Addressing a press conference, Natarajan, AICC in-charge for Telangana, claimed the BJP filed nominations for a third seat with foul intent despite lacking the required numbers for victory. The Returning Officer's order cited an incomplete affidavit, omitting a court complaint in Form 26.

An official said the BJP candidate, Mahesh Kewat, lodged a complaint alleging Natarajan failed to disclose a case registered against her in Telangana. The returning officer declared three BJP candidates elected unopposed on 11 June. The Supreme Court dismissed Natarajan's plea on 12 June but allowed her to file an election petition. Natarajan alleged her nomination was rejected because of a legal notice, and not a criminal case, and claimed the Returning Officers were compromised. She stated her reply to a pending legal notice was submitted, and she informed the ROs accordingly.

Natarajan accused the BJP of conspiracy, alleging the Election Commission is compromised.

She dismissed reports of a Congress RS member resigning to accommodate her and called the BJP's actions "party chori" aimed at mocking democracy. —*PTI*

'BLOs OVERBURDENED'

YSRCP flags 'irregularities' in Andhra SIR, writes to ECI

AMARAVATI, 21 JUNE

The YSRCP said that certain issues, irregularities and practical difficulties are plaguing the SIR of electoral rolls in Andhra Pradesh, and requested the ECI to immediately take corrective measures.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), YSRCP MLC and State General Secretary L Appireddy raised several issues, like Booth Level Officers (BLOs) being interrupted, lack of adequate public awareness and others.

"I respectfully submit this representation bringing to your (CEO) notice certain serious issues, irregularities and practical difficulties being faced in the implementation of SIR in Andhra Pradesh, which require immediate corrective measures," he said. Appireddy said BLOs, who are assigned for SIR, are also burdened with their regular duties.

While carrying out SIR work, BLOs are frequently being summoned by their superiors to attend to routine work, affecting the SIR process, the YSRCP leader said.

Consequently, he called for instructions to all departments to ensure that BLOs are allowed to devote adequate time exclusively to SIR during the revision period.

Although Enumeration Forms (EFs) are being distributed by BLOs, the MLC noted that in many places they are "not being properly collected, verified and filed." Hence, he said it is causing confusion regarding the status of applications. Claiming that public awareness of SIR is inadequate, Appireddy said many electors are not aware of the exercise.

Therefore, extensive awareness campaigns through mike announcements, local publicity and other communication methods must be undertaken by the ECI, he said —*PTI*

TMC MP ABHISHEK'S AIDE SUMIT BOOKED IN FRAUD CASE

KOLKATA, 21 JUNE

A close aide of Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee has been booked in a case of fraud and forgery in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district, a police officer said on Sunday.

The suspect, Sumit Roy, was recently booked in a land-grab case, and the West Bengal police has issued a lookout notice against him. Police had conducted a search at Banerjee's residence in Kolkata to locate Roy.

On Sunday, a police officer said a case of fraud and forgery has been registered against Roy at the Debra police station in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district.

The complainant accused Roy, who has been absconding for quite some time, of cheating and forgery, he said, adding that the arrested former Medinipur MLA Sujoy Hazra has also been named in the case.

A senior CID official said the allegations mentioned in the complaint are being examined, and the agency would extend all assistance to the police, if required. —*PTI*

Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar met Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray at his residence 'Matoshree' in Mumbai on Sunday—*PTI*

DKS, Uddhav meet amid Sena (UBT) rebellion

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar met Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray at his residence, Matoshree, here.

The meeting held on Saturday came in the backdrop of an internal rift in the Sena (UBT) after six of its Lok Sabha MPs skipped a parliamentary party meeting.

Uddhav's wife Rashmi Thackeray, Yuvasena chief Aaditya Thackeray, and MP Sanjay Raut were present at Matoshree during the meeting with DK Shivakumar.

Amid the buzz over 'Operation Tiger', Sena UBT stands on the brink of a mass defection of parliamentarians to the Shinde-led Shiv Sena, in a repeat of the 2022 split.

While Shivakumar and Uddhav held a meeting, sparking speculations of a merger with the Congress, Uddhav clarified that his party will not merge with the Congress.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, the party's Chief Whip in the Lok Sabha, Anil Desai, issued a fresh show-cause notice to its absentee MPs, threatening disqualification.

"They have been given a 24-hour deadline to provide a written explanation. If the MPs fail to respond, the party will assume they have left, and they will face action under the Anti-Defection Law," he said.

Six of the nine MPs in the LS make up 2/3rd of the seats, and with the merger with Shiv Sena on cards, they may get immunity against disqualification as the merger stands as an exception in the anti-defection law. —*PTI*

UDDHAV CAMP MP CONFIRMS JUMP TO RULING SENA

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 21 JUNE

Rebel Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Nagesh Patil Ashtikar on Sunday claimed he and other MPs had "not gone anywhere" until 18 June, but changed their mind after certain remarks were made against them, an apparent reference to Sanjay Raut.

Coming forward for the first time after rumours about 'Operation Tiger' started swirling around, the Hingoli MP confirmed that he has crossed over to the Shiv Sena headed by Deputy CM Eknath Shinde.

In a video clip posted on his social media handle, Ashtikar said he has not compromised on his ideology and "has just gone from one Shiv Sena to another."

He also cited the lack of development funds and the inability to get party activists' work done as reasons for his defection.

Ashtikar clarified that he was not upset with Sena (UBT) president Uddhav and leader Sanjay Raut.

"People elected us with a lot of expectation. But I was not getting any development funds. The Rs 5 crore MPLAD fund is very limited. Considering these factors, I took this decision," Ashtikar said. —*PTI*

WB govt plans laws to tackle public disorder, attacks on police

KOLKATA, 21 JUNE

The West Bengal government is set to introduce two bills in the Assembly to strictly deal with public disorder, vandalism and attacks on police personnel and public servants, an official said on Sunday.

He said the Home Department is likely to place the proposed legislation before the Cabinet for approval on Monday.

The bills are expected to be tabled during the Budget Session of the Assembly, said the senior official in the state secretariat.

"The objective is not only to maintain law and order but also to ensure public safety. There have been repeated instances where police, administrative officials and Central forces being attacked while performing duties," the official said.

Among the bills, one seeks to amend the West Bengal Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1972, which deals with riots, arson, looting, use of explosives and other actions that threaten public order, he said.

The amendment is expected to propose widening the scope of the law and provide additional powers to the administration, the official added.

"The second proposal is a new legislation titled the Public Safety Control and Anti-Social Activity Bill," he said. The new bill proposes to strengthen public safety and address anti-social activities comprehensively, the official explained —*PTI*

CONGRESS WANTS RIGHT TO VOTE MADE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Congress has called for the right to vote to be recognised as a fundamental right, stating it would provide stronger safeguards against voter suppression and arbitrary disqualifications, which have occurred in various states under the SIR process. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh highlighted the alleged partisan conduct of the Election Commission of India, working under the influence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He argued that elevating voting rights to a fundamental right would grant it the highest judicial protection.

Ramesh noted that recently, the Supreme Court declared the right to walk on a footpath as a fundamental right. He recalled that during the Constituent Assembly discussions in 1947, figures like Dr. Ambedkar and Babu Jagjivan Ram strongly advocated for the right to vote as a fundamental right, though some, including Sardar Patel, believed universal adult franchise was implicit.

Over the decades, debates have continued on whether voting is a statutory or fundamental right, with Justice Ajay Rastogi recently affirming it as fundamental. The SC has recognised voters' right to know candidates' criminal records and funding sources.

Ramesh emphasised that making voting a fundamental right would enhance safeguards and judicial oversight, crucial for protecting Indian democracy. —*PTI*

NIA CHARGESHEET

'Drones brought guns for Pahalgam raid'

SRINAGAR, 21 JUNE

Cross-border drones successfully dropped arms and ammunition deep into Kashmir without detection, according to a National Investigation Agency (NIA) chargesheet filed in the last year's Pahalgam terror attack case.

Rather than relying solely on traditional, heavily guarded infiltration routes along the Line of Control (LoC), handlers from across the border are increasingly deploying unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). In the chargesheet, the NIA said that the terror group received 20 pistols, Rs 15 lakh, and triangle shaped bombs (Chinese grenades) in early 2024 in this manner.

Officials noted that these drones managed to penetrate deep into the hinterland, bypassing multi-tiered security cordons to deliver hardware and money directly to terror cells operating in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, especially the Gogal Dara forests.

The NIA chargesheet alleges that arms were dropped on Indian territory using drones and that there was a drop in human intel gathering—*PTI*

Experts analysing the chargesheet argue that an over-reliance on technical intelligence at the expense of cultivating local, ground-level human intelligence (HUMINT) networks during the 2022-2024 period created a operational vacuum. This, they believe, allowed the perpetrators to scout targets, receive aerial weapon drops, and execute the high-profile strike without triggering early warning systems.

They suggested that the security forces should review their tactics and regain the trust of Gujjar and Bakerwal nomadic tribes, who have been crucial collaborators for the security forces for decades due to their deep knowledge of the rugged terrain and unwavering loyalty.

The exhaustive NIA probe has tracked the pre-attack movements of the terrorists who struck the popular Baisaran meadows in Pahalgam in April last year. The terror attack resulted in the death of 26 people, the majority of whom were tourists. — *PTI*

—ANI

M'rashtra minister slams pool party at club

THANE, 21 JUNE

Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik criticised a scheduled pool party at a Mira-Bhayandar club amid severe water shortages. Addressing a press conference, Sarnaik urged protests against the event, planned for 27 June at the Seven Eleven Club affiliated with MLA Narendra Mehta. He called organising water-consuming events during hardships "insensitive" and appealed to civic and police authorities to intervene. The minister added that disruptions in the Surya Water Project had left several areas waterless for two days. Attempts to contact the organisers of the pool party failed. —*PTI*

ED seizes Rs 23L cash, freezes Rs 3 cr in MP

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids in Madhya Pradesh, seizing Rs 23 lakh cash and freezing deposits worth about Rs 3 crore. The searches, on 19 June in Rewa and Jabalpur, targeted a case of submission of "fake bills" in road construction. The ED filed a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act after FIRs from the Madhya Pradesh police. Contractors allegedly conspired with officials to fraudulently claim government payments by submitting forged invoices from oil companies worth Rs 55.60 crore, causing financial loss. The agency said Rs 23.50 lakh cash was seized, and Rs 2.93 crore worth deposits were frozen. —*PTI*

Rain, travel woes add to NEET anxiety

Burqa-clad NEET candidate denied entry to exam hall initially in Rajasthan's Ajmer

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

From accidents and waterlogged roads to transport disruptions and a dress-code controversy, thousands of NEET-UG aspirants faced hurdles on Sunday as they appeared for the re-examination held under tight security.

Candidates and their families reported travel difficulties in reaching examination centres in several cities.

In Bhopal, two students were denied entry after arriving late. Amir Qadri, uncle of one of the candidates, said they met with an accident on their way to the centre and his nephew had to take first aid. By the time they arrived, authorities refused entry, saying the examination had already begun. Heavy rains lashed Kolkata, causing severe waterlogging and traffic disruptions. While the showers brought relief, they made travel difficult for students.

In Mumbai, the BEST arranged bus services amid an employees' strike. The BMC 180 bus trips were planned, with 60 buses deployed on 24 routes to facilitate travel to 63 examination centres.

Candidates undergo security check before appearing for the NEET-UG re-examination at an exam centre, in Nagpur in Maharashtra —*PTI*

A dress-code controversy also surfaced in Rajasthan's Ajmer, where a NEET candidate wearing a burqa alleged she was initially denied entry. Kulsum Bano, who had travelled from Beawar, said she was asked to remove her dupatta and r her burqa. "The exam doesn't matter to me; what matters is my burqa," she said. The NTA later clarified that she was allowed entry.

Kishan, a candidate appearing in Delhi, said security checks were stricter this time. Sonia said she felt more stressed during the re-test than during the first exam.

While welcoming the provision of drinking water and coolers, she said the tight security added to her tension.

"If such security had been in place last time, the chances of a paper leak would have been less," she said. — *PTI*

NEET candidate ends life in Hyd

A 19-year-old NEET candidate allegedly ended her life here, police said on Sunday.

The woman, who was staying with her sisters in an apartment in Miyapur, allegedly hanged herself on Saturday, a police official said.

Police recovered a note in which she stated that "no one is responsible for her death." —*PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Late students denied entry

Tensions flared at the Maharishi Dayanand College in Mumbai's Parel area as two NEET candidates were denied entry as they arrived late.

One student was from Kurla, and the other from the Dombivli area.

A similar incident took place in Bengaluru after four students were denied entry to a NEET centre as they arrived just after the 1:30 pm deadline. Their parents said that traffic jams caused by a Congress rally led to the delay.

Eyewitnesses said an announcement was made at 1:29 pm that it was the last minute before the gates would be locked. —*PTI*

Tension over hijab and sacred thread

A brief commotion was reported outside a NEET-UG re-test centre in Ahmedabad on Sunday after some parents objected to the removal of the 'kanthi' (Hindu sacred threads) during frisking, although hijab clad students were allowed inside.

Two members of a Hindu organisation who created protested outside the exam centre in Vastrapur were detained and later released.

He said some parents objected to Hindu students being asked to remove their sacred threads while females wearing hijab were permitted to enter. —*PTI*

ED seizes assets worth Rs 1,023 cr in Goa

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The ED said on Sunday that it has attached assets worth around Rs 1,023 crore, including properties in Singapore, in an alleged illegal iron ore mining case in Goa. A provisional order was issued on 19 June under the PMLA regarding the illegal iron ore mining by Salgaocar Groups and associates (AVS Group), the ED said.

The attached assets include 99 immovable properties in India (Rs 459.10 crore), 31 immovable properties in Singapore (Rs 471.32 crore) and shares in Indian companies (Rs 93.42 crore) held in the names the Estate of the late Anil Salgaocar (through its administrator Lakshmi Anil Salgaocar), Salgaocar Mining Industries, Shantilal Khushaldas & Brothers, S Kantilal & Co., Salitho Ores, Vertex Newton Projects. and Subarnarekha Port, the ED said. The total value of the assets is Rs 1,023.85 crore.

The money laundering investigation stems from an FIR file by the Goa Police CID —*PTI*

The money laundering investigation stems from a FIR of the Goa Police CID. The ED said the SC had held that all mining undertaken in Goa after 22.11.2007 (till the issue of fresh mining leases) were illegal. The ED alleged that its probe found AVS Group operated 10 mining leases during

- The 'illegally' mined ore was exported at 'grossly undervalued' prices to shell entities in the British Virgin Islands, which acted as paper intermediaries and resold the ore to China

2007-12 and generated crime proceeds worth Rs 2,492.95 crore through the lillegal export of iron ore.

The "illegally" mined ore was exported at "grossly undervalued" prices to shell entities incorporated in the British Virgin Islands, which acted as paper intermediaries and resold the ore to China, generating offshore trade profits of Rs 2,744.89 crore. — *PTI*

Tension at Keralam prayer venue as BJP protests 'assault'

Believers at the Elohim Global Worship Centre at Omallur in Keralam argue with cops demanding entry into the prayer hall on Sunday—*ANI*

PATHANAMTHITTA, 21 JUNE

- The BJP protesters, including women, said they were not opposed to the worship but were protesting the alleged exploitation and cruelty carried out under the guise of religion

Tension prevailed outside a hall where a prayer meeting organised by a pastor-run Christian worship centre was to be held at Omallur here on Sunday, as BJP workers staged a protest following allegations that staffers of a facility linked to the organisation had assaulted a 17-year-old boy.

Believers who arrived for the prayer meet, organised by the Elohim Global Worship Centre, gathered outside the hall holding Bibles and demanded that they be allowed to enter and pray.

The BJP protesters, including women, said they were not opposed to worship but were protesting the alleged exploitation and cruelty carried out under the guise of religion.

Police had a tough time bringing the situation under control as both groups assembled outside the centre.

Later, the believers were allowed to enter the prayer hall and conduct their Sunday prayers.

The protest comes after a police investigation into allegations that staffers of the Elohim Global Worship Centre assaulted the teen who had been staying there.

The BJP workers said that people were being exploited and that people were brought to the organisation's facilities like old-age homes and other institutions for money.

Supporters of the worship centre rejected the allegations and insisted that religious activities should not be obstructed. —*PTI*

UP FARMERS SEEK COMPENSATION AFTER MAIZE CROP FAILS

MATHURA, 21 JUNE

Farmers are seeking compensation from the government, stating that even though the maize crop looks lush and green, the cobs have not developed any corn kernels.

Acting on the farmers' complaints, the Directorate of Agriculture has constituted an inquiry committee led by Vinod Kumar Yadav, the Joint Director of Agriculture of the Agra Division.

The panel will examine various factors, including the genetic quality of the maize seeds, soil health and moisture levels.

Experts will also assess whether seed quality, weather, or a soil nutrient imbalance is responsible for the crop failure.

District Agriculture Officer Avesh Kumar Singh said that if the investigation reveals defects or fraud regarding seeds, action will be taken against the company, and farmers will be given compensation. A show-cause notice has been issued to the seed manufacturer.

Singh said complaints have been received from farmers who purchased subsidised maize seeds from the government agriculture seed depot in Raya. Fifty-four farmers in the district had used 16 quintals of seeds from Hill India Company. — *PTI*

1.13cr sq.m Goa land no dvpt zone

PANAJI, 21 JUNE

The Goa government has issued a notification declaring nearly 1.13 crore square metres of eco-sensitive land across the state as a no-development zone, officials said on Sunday.

The move aims to safeguard Goa's ecological assets and prevent indiscriminate development in environmentally fragile areas, they said.

The latest notification was issued on 18 June after a decision taken by the State Town and Country Planning Board, chaired by Minister Vishwajit Rane.

The notification declares paddy fields, khazan lands, mangroves, water bodies, rivers and canals, fish farms, orchards, salt pans, sand dunes, and natural cover areas as non-developable zones. The proposals were approved during the 235th meeting of the Goa Town and Country Planning (TCP) Board held on 10 June and have now been placed in the public domain, officials said.

Among the largest areas proposed for no-development zone tag is Carmona in Salcette (South Goa), where approximately 30.43 lakh square metres of land, comprising paddy fields, mangroves, fish farms, water bodies, rivers and orchards, has been recommended for protection.

Other major areas proposed as no-development zones include 24.13 lakh sqm of eco-sensitive land in Varca (Salcette).

The TCP Department has invited suggestions and objections from the public within 30 days of the publication of the notification. The proposals are available for public inspection at the department's regional plan cell in Patto, Panaji.

Once the consultation period ends, the proposals and public feedback will be placed before the TCP Board. — *PTI*

Food poisoning: FDA cracks down on Bhiwandi eateries

THANE, 21 JUNE

Five days after a major food poisoning outbreak in the Bhiwandi town of Maharashtra, 79 people are undergoing treatment at a local hospital after consuming snacks at a eatery, a senior medical official said Sunday.

The FDA has since launched a crackdown on food joints and has sealed a prominent eatery in the town.

Police said several customers who had eaten food at a local establishment on 17 June experienced stomach ache and diarrhoea the following day and had to be rushed to hospitals.

Dr Madhavi S Pandare, the Medical Superintendent of IGM Hospital, said that 124 patients were admitted after the incident, and of them, 45 were discharged. 79 are under observation.

"The patients are out of danger. Some of them still complain of pain and loose motions. We have sufficient staff and medicines," Dr Pandare said. Patient samples have been sent for analysis to determine the cause of the illness, she said.

FDA Assistant Commissioner (Bhiwandi) Santosh Shirosia said that after the incident, inspections were carried out in many eateries.

"Samples from the affected shawarma outlet were sent for analysis, and it was sealed," he said. — *PTI*

INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

Andhra to set up yoga halls, launch Yogandhra portal

VIJAYAWADA, 21 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu observed International Yoga Day on Sunday along with yoga guru Baba Ramdev and announced initiatives to promote yoga.

He asserted that regular practice of yoga, meditation and pranayama could improve public health.

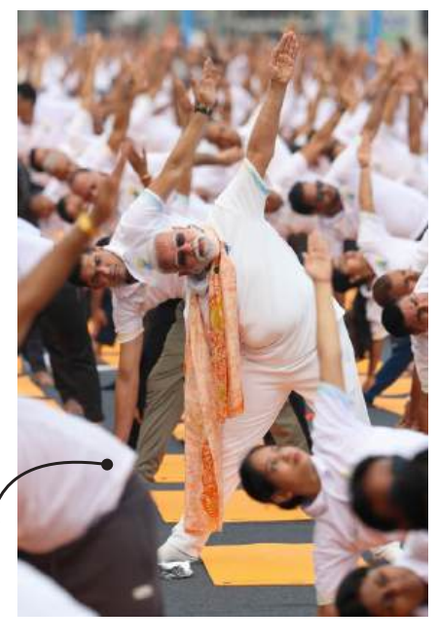
Speaking at the 12th International Yoga Day celebrations organised under the state government's Yogandhra initiative at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium here the CM said permanent yoga halls would be established in Swarna Gram and ward secretariat offices, district and mandal-level officials would be appointed to monitor yoga programmes, an expert committee would formulate standard yoga protocols, and a dedicated Yogandhra portal would be launched. He also announced that next year's International Yoga Day celebrations would be organised in Tirupati.

Recalling the success of Yogandhra-2025 in Visakhapatnam, he said the state had created Guinness World Records and other records in the presence of the PM. He said the Sanjeevani project would be implemented from 15 August, and yoga would be integrated into the programme. — *PTI*

Indian Army personnel perform yoga in the high-altitude terrain of Pangong Tso in Ladakh—*PTI*

An Indian Army sniffer dog and its handler do yoga at the Siachen Glacier in the Union Territory of Ladakh —*PTI*

A young participant practices yoga during a session in Maharashtra's Nagpur—*PTI*



Prime Minister Narendra Modi participates in a yoga training session along with others in West Bengal's Kolkata.—*PTI*

Keralam ex-nurse, 78, swears by yoga

KOTTAYAM, 21 JUNE

While many people her age choose different ways to stay active, 78-year-old retired nurse Annamma Trueb Vayalunkal starts each day with a 30-minute session of aqua yoga in the swimming pool at her farmhouse in Kottayam district.

A former NRI nurse who spent decades working in Europe, Annamma credits her practice of "jala yoga," or aqua yoga, for her good health. "Even at 78, I do not have any major health issues because of jala yoga," she said on Sunday at her farmhouse near Pampady. For more than four decades, she has followed a daily regimen of yoga and natural food, mostly vegetarian.

Annamma was introduced to aqua yoga while working in Switzerland, where a fellow nurse trained her. —*PTI*

INDIA CANNOT BE A SUPERPOWER WITHOUT A STRONG EDUCATION SYSTEM: MANSOOR ALI KHAN

SALAR UPCLOSE

Naheed Ataulla

An educator and visionary who has shaped countless young minds, Mansoor Ali Khan now transitions from academia to national politics as the Congress Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka. He is poised to continue the legacy of his father, veteran Congressman and former deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha, K Rahman Khan.

In an interview with **Salar News**, Khan shares his thoughts on the National Education Policy (NEP), the issues he plans to raise in Parliament; and vote chori, a matter he has pursued with zeal to expose alleged electoral fraud.

Bengaluru accounts for a staggering portion of the nation's tech economy but is struggling with infrastructure bottlenecks and a water crisis. How will you work to get Central clearance or faster funding for critical state projects like the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project or the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project?

First, I would like to thank the Congress leadership and the people of Karnataka for making me a Rajya Sabha member. Bengaluru is the leading city and the tech capital of India. It generates a lot of revenue not only for Karnataka but also for the entire country.

As a Rajya Sabha member, it will be my prime focus to ensure that Bengaluru gets its share of Central funds and Karnataka gets its due share. Over a period of time, Bengaluru has been generating wealth and resources for the country. But somewhere over the last 12 to 13 years, we have not been getting our due share.

There is a lot of traffic congestion in Bengaluru and urban mobility issues, and we need support for Bengaluru Metro Rail, suburban rail and airport connectivity. Bengaluru doesn't just belong to Karnataka; it's the pride of India. Across the world, India and Bengaluru are spoken of in the same breath.

Even for projects like Mekedatu, there has to be a federal structure for the fair sharing of resources.

I think these will be among my prime focuses, to get Karnataka and Bengaluru their fair share of funds.

The Congress-led Karnataka government has been highly critical of NEP and has actively pushed to replace it with a State Education Policy (SEP). As an educator and a lawmaker, what specific structural flaws do you see in the NEP that justify a separate state policy?

Definitely. The NEP came in 2020, before that, as an educationist, I don't think we got enough time to deliberate and debate the policy with stakeholders, be it the states, private stakeholders, teachers, parents or others.

I feel NEP has not addressed the education needs of India in totality, whether in higher education or infrastructure development. Somewhere down the line, I feel NEP is more about promoting a particular ideology, and that's why there is apprehension.

When you make an education policy for a country, it is the duty of the Central government to ensure that states, private stakeholders, teachers and parents are taken into confidence. I am not opposed to education reforms. Reforms are necessary with time. The last major education reform was quite some time ago. But the way it has been done, and the objectives behind it, are the reasons why Karnataka and a few other states have been highly critical.

How do you plan to take forward the Congress charge of the Election Commission (EC) allegedly facilitating electoral malpractices, with Bengaluru Central Lok Sabha seat being the first case study of vote chori? You have said vote chori does not start on the counting day, but inside the voters' list.

When the election was held to the Bengaluru Central Lok Sabha seat, the way it was conducted and the condition of the electoral rolls raised serious concerns.

When Congress leader Rahul Gandhi came to know about it, he took it up and made the entire country aware of vote chori. Noting the misuse of forms, fake names, fake addresses and nearly 1 lakh anomalies in Mahadevapura, we approached the EC in all earnestness. We submitted letters and reminders, but we have not received any response. In a democracy, even a doubt about the electoral system should be enough to awaken the entire system because it concerns your franchise and the integrity of the EC. The EC cannot be seen as partisan. Today, many people feel the EC is biased and unfair. Even that doubt entering the minds of citizens is unfortunate and dangerous for democracy.

Rahul Gandhi has made this a movement. After the West Bengal Assembly polls and the way the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process has been conducted there, every Indian should ask: Is our electoral system functioning properly? Is democracy really as safe as we think? Is the Indian Constitution safe enough?

After the Bengal elections, the way the Trinamool Congress Party (TMC) has been weakened and what is happening in Maharashtra with Uddhav Thackeray, the ruling dispensation is using every possible means to secure a two-thirds majority in both Houses. This is a very dangerous situation for the country.

What precautionary measures is the Congress taking with SIR commencing in Karnataka?

We are conducting awareness programmes. Our booth agents, MLAs, candidates and party cadre know the entire process.

The SIR starts from 30 June in Karnataka. Our booth agents, along with booth-level officers, will go door to door. We will do everything possible to ensure a sanitised and clean electoral list where no particular caste or community is targeted.

There are apprehensions that certain communities may be targeted and opposition parties fear their voters may be removed. But I think, in Karnataka, the Congress party is very well prepared.

After West Bengal's experience, where the process was carried out with very little time, it appeared to be a deliberate attempt to derail the TMC government.

The Congress allegation is that after vote chori, this SIR exercise is being used to defeat the party?

First of all, if the EC was transparent and communicative, all these doubts and questions would not arise.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and the Election Commissioners do not respond. They don't even seem to consider the Opposition an essential part of democracy.

Earlier too, the EC existed, but there was a sense of fairness. The entire question mark around the SIR process is because of the attitude of the EC.

The EC is particularly harsh on Opposition parties.

Central examinations like NEET and CBSE have faced criticism regarding paper leaks or operational inefficiencies. Given your domain knowledge, what policy or legislative alternatives will you propose in the Rajya Sabha to reform them?

First and foremost, education is the pillar on which India aspires to become a superpower. Any country aspiring to become a superpower should have a very strong education system.

Unfortunately, NEET exam papers have been leaked time and again. It is unimaginable that the Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan continues in office after the NEET fiasco.

What decisions are being taken? You talk about changing how papers are transferred, but you are not addressing what is happening within the system. Who is responsible? There is no accountability.

Rahul Gandhi's rally in Kota and the issues raised there show that every student sacrifices time, money and effort. Then a paper leak happens and students are asked to reappear for the examination.

This is not happening for the first time. If you look at CBSE, portals have been hacked. CBSE has been taking decisions without fully realising the implications.

Reforms are required. An organisation as large as CBSE cannot keep experimenting without taking stakeholders into confidence. Whether it is NEET or CBSE, I think this government has lost control and has no clear vision on where it wants to take the education sector in India.

How do you plan to position yourself as the rising leader of the Muslim community with the passing away or fading influence of the community's leaders?

The Muslim community is a very marginalised community in the country. If you look at indicators of backwardness and development, the Muslim community is lagging behind.

As a Rajya Sabha representative, I would like to focus on this issue.

In a family with five children, if one child requires extra help, the family supports that child. Similarly, the Government of India should come forward and assist with education programmes, socio-economic development, youth empowerment, employment opportunities and equal opportunities for the community.

Unfortunately, that is not happening.

As far as Karnataka is concerned, we have very capable Muslim leadership. Congress is a party where every Muslim legislator and MP knows that we are committed to the upliftment of the community and that the party is above any individual.

Your father K Rahman Khan was a four-term Rajya Sabha member, served as the House deputy chairman and, as Union minister, was instrumental in bringing amendments to the Waqf Act. What is your takeaway from him?

My father has always been an inspiration to me. He always believed that if the community is strengthened, the country is strengthened.

The Waqf issue was very close to his heart. He introduced the Waqf Amendment Bill because he believed those reforms could address backwardness in education, healthcare and other sectors.

He always led by example. Whether as a legislator or MP, he made sure he was effective both inside and outside the House. He ensured he remained answerable to the people who put him in that position.

He was an MP till 2018 and there were other initiatives, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, that could not be completed before the UPA-II tenure ended.

Nonetheless, he remains my inspiration. I would be very happy if I could achieve even 50 per cent of what he accomplished in his political career.

Your first Special Mention: Every MP remembers their first major speech in the House. Which issue pertaining to Karnataka do you plan to raise first?

I will not say just one or two issues. I have a few issues close to my heart.

One is the empowerment of youth. Our country is a very young country, and we must empower our youth. Education is close to my heart and is a very important subject for me. I would definitely like to raise the issue of Karnataka's share of funds from the Centre. Since ours is a federal structure, the Centre and the states must work together, and Karnataka should receive its fair share.

Finally, I would like to take up the cause of the underprivileged and common people.

In my first speech itself, I want to make it clear that if, during my Rajya Sabha term, I am unable to make a difference in the life of a common person, then I would consider that I have not fulfilled my duty as an MP.

Scan the QR below to watch the full interview on Salar Digital YouTube

Rajya Sabha's Congress MP Mansoor Ali Khan holds a copy of the Constitution outside Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru; Mansoor, who is also an educator, is seen with school students. He calls for reforms in CBSE and NEET and says the Central government lacks a clear vision for India's education sector —MOHAMMED ASAD/ SALAR

> I want to make it clear that if, during my Rajya Sabha term, I am unable to make a difference in the life of a common person, then I would consider that I have not fulfilled my duty as an MP
>
> An organisation as large as CBSE cannot keep experimenting without taking stakeholders into confidence. Whether it is NEET or CBSE, I think this government has lost control and has no clear vision on where it wants to take the education sector in India
>
> — Mansoor Ali Khan

LETTERS

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Parents seek NEET reforms; Latur coaching hub feels the heat

The fallout of the NEET paper leak controversy continues to haunt students and coaching centres alike, with parents demanding a foolproof examination system while stakeholders in Maharashtra's coaching hub of Latur blame social media rumours for a sharp fall in admissions.

At a NEET-UG re-examination centre in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday, Ganesh, who accompanied his daughter to Andhra University in Visakhapatnam, urged authorities to ensure such disruptions do not recur.

"Many children are suffering a lot. Such mistakes should not happen again and again. Therefore, we are requesting the government and officials to manage this properly and rectify it," he said.

Ganesh said his daughter had earlier appeared for the examination at a Polytechnic Centre and had faced difficulties before being required to sit for the re-examination.

Repeated disruptions place an additional burden on students already preparing for one of the country's most competitive examinations, he said, adding that parents too bear the emotion-al and financial strain.

"We are preparing for this MBBS by spending a lot of money. The coaching centres are also repeatedly demanding money, and poor people like us cannot afford that much money," he said.

The concerns expressed by parents come as Latur, one of Maharashtra's best-known centres for competitive examination coaching, witnesses a significant decline in admissions this academic year.

The city hosts nearly 300 hostels and caters to 70,000 to 80,000 Class 12 students from across the state and neighbouring regions. However, stakeholders insist that the drop in admissions has less to do with the high-profile NEET paper leak case and more with rumours circulating on social media.

Last month, the CBI arrested Shivraj Raghunath Motegaonkar, founder of the city-based Renukai Career Centre (RCC), retired professor PV Kulkarni and Dr Manoj Shirure in con-nection with the NEET paper leak case.

Even so, hostel owners, traders and coaching institutes argue that other factors are weighing more heavily on parents' decisions.

Among them is a directive issued by the District Industries Centre ordering the closure of commercial activities operating illegally in industrial sheds allotted for manufacturing within the Latur Industrial Estate Co-operative Society.

The state's decision to make biometric attendance mandatory for junior college students has added to the uncertainty. Delayed monsoon rains and fears of drought-like conditions have also influenced admission decisions, stakeholders said.

Nitin Pawar, president of the Latur Hostel Association, claimed admissions for Class 12 students had fallen by nearly 40 per cent this year due to "news spread on social media de-faming the Latur pattern" and concerns over biometric attendance.

Many hostel owners had taken bank loans or rented premises and now face financial pres-sure because of the decline, he said.

The slowdown has affected businesses dependent on students.

"Business has become increasingly difficult due to the current situation in the coaching classes area. I made a stock of cold drinks in May expecting the usual rush of students, but a significant portion remains unsold," said Manoj Fawde, who runs a cafe in the area.

Raghuvir Godbharle, vice-president of a hostel association and owner of two hostels, claimed protests over the NEET paper leak had led to the cancellation of nearly 27 admis-sions at his establishments in the last month.

Latur has more than 150 coaching institutes, though only seven or eight are considered large-budget establishments, according to Vikas Kadam, state executive president of the Professional Teachers' Association.

"The NEET paper leak case and RCC owner Shivraj Motegaonkar's arrest have not directly impacted admissions. The greater damage was caused by rumours and misinformation cir-culating on social media after the administration issued closure notices for commercial activities in the area," he claimed.

Parents began questioning whether coaching institutes and hostels would continue to operate, Kadam said, adding that negative publicity had inadvertently benefited coaching centres in other districts, which were able to attract students who would otherwise have chosen Latur. —*PTI*

NEET-UG candidates hug each other after exiting an examination centre in New Delhi on Sunday while security personnel checks a candidate's sandals before he goes in for the examination in Nagpur —PTI

Trump threatens to bomb Iran if deal not done

Says US 'can charge Hormuz toll, sieze 20% oil & negotiators won't have a f***ing country'

WASHINGTON, 21 JUNE

Even as peace talks were underway in Switzerland on Sunday, US President Donald Trump escalated his rhetoric against Iran on Sunday, threatening to "blow the sh*t out of" the Iranians and taking over the Strait of Hormuz.

He first posted on Truth Social, warning that the US will "hit Iran very hard again, just like we did last week, only harder" if Tehran did not stop "their highly paid proxies (Hezbollah) from causing trouble".

Notably, the comments came as Israeli forces killed at least 16 people in Lebanon, state-run National New Agency reported on Sunday. The Lebanese Public Health Ministry stated that Israeli airstrikes on Sohmur in the Western Bekaa killed seven people, including a woman and a child. Meanwhile, an airstrike on the Rashidieh area in the Tyre district killed two Palestinians.

In an interview later on Sunday with Fox News, Trump said that the US could become the "guardian angles" of the Strait, through which nearly a fifth of the world's oil once passed, and take 20 per cent of the crude if the fragile peace deal falls apart.

"You close it, and you won't have a country," Trump said

At least 16 people were killed in Lebanon on Sunday, as Israel said it would not withdraw from the 'security zone' for years —X@UNHCRLLEBANON

of the Strait, according to Fox News correspondent Trey Yingst. "You won't even make it back to your f**k**g country."

"We may take over the Strait, if we have to. If they don't make a deal, we'll collect tolls," Trump added. He had earlier posted the same comments on his Truth Social, noting that a deal must be struck during the 60 days window.

His comments come a day after Iran said it was closing the Straits again over Israel's massive strikes in Lebanon.

Iran, meanwhile, as tied the outcome of the peace negotiations to the ceasefire in Lebanon.

Before the talks began in Switzerland, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei stated on X Iran is seeking to draw attention to the very first point in the interim agreement, dubbed the "Islamabad Memorandum". This calls for a ceasefire on all fronts, including Lebanon.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, meanwhile, has hailed the interim deal as a victory for Iran, stating that Tehran got everything it wanted.

"With the start of the negotiations from today, the $6 billion we have in Qatar will also be unfrozen and returned to our country," he said, according to state media. Referring to Washington's position that Iran should not produce atomic weapons, President Pezeshkian said the Islamic Republic has repeatedly stated that it will never seek to produce a nuclear bomb.

Meanwhile, Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said that the IDF will continue to hold the "security zone" in south Lebanon "for years" and that the Americans are okay with this plan.

The security zone spans around 10 to 15 per cent of Lebanese territory.

"We are there until Hezbollah disarms, and I think also beyond that, because we need defendable borders," Smotrich told Israeli publication Makor Rishon. "This is the stance of Prime Minister (Benjamin Netanyahu), Defence Minister (Israel Ktaz), and mine too."

Notably, he added that the US was unlikely to demand for Israeli withdrawal, stating that they "understand our red lines" and added that he was speaking as someone who has been involved in the negotiations. —*Agencies*

Al Jazeera cameraman Ahmed Wishah was killed by Israel in Gaza on Saturday. His brother, also a journalist, was killed in April —AL JAZEERA

Al Jazeera scribe among 6 dead in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 21 JUNE

Israeli strikes in Gaza on Saturday killed at least six people, including two children and a cameraman with broadcaster Al Jazeera, according to Palestinian health officials.

On Saturday evening, three Israeli strikes killed four people and wounded at least a dozen others. The first hit a house in central Gaza's Bureij refugee camp without warning, killing three people, including Al Jazeera cameraman Ahmed Wishah, according to Al-Aqsa hospital. Al Jazeera confirmed Wishah's death.

The Israeli military stated it killed him in a "precise strike."

Wishah's brother Mohamed, who was a correspondent for Al Jazeera, was killed in an Israeli strike in April.

A strike on an apartment in Gaza City, also killed two sisters aged 4 and 14.

Another strike on Saturday targeted a group of people in the sprawling tent camp of Muwasi in southern Gaza, killing one and wounding eight others. A third strike in Gaza City targeted a group of people and wounded at least four. —*PTI*

Olympic cyclist held for vandaling Trump's pool

WASHINGTON, 21 JUNE

US President Donald Trump said multiple people were arrested for allegedly vandalising the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, warning that those responsible could face prison terms. In a Truth Social post, Trump called the damage to the national monument a serious crime and said repair work would begin immediately. This comes after an algae outbreak in the pool made many question why USD 14 million was spent on refurbishing the pool. According to reports, Olympic cyclist David Hearn was arrested on a misdemeanour charge of destruction of government property after an incident at the pool. Hearn is scheduled to appear in court on 9 July. Authorities have not released details of other arrests so far.—*PTI*

Russia releases Fillipino detainees after Prezs talk

MANILA, 21 JUNE

Russia has released 24 Filipinos detained in Siberia for months without charges, following Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's concern raised during a meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Kazan. The Filipinos arrived in Manila early Sunday on two flights, welcomed by Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro and Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Cacdac, who provided aid. Marcos, who leads ASEAN, discussed the issue with Putin, who said, "We will find a way to fix this problem," and assured him the Filipinos had not been charged with wrongdoing. Marcos stated Putin told him, "the Filipinos had not been charged with any wrongdoing," and promised to look into the case. About 15,000 Filipinos live and work in Russia. —*PTI*

—SCREENGRAB

Ubisoft founder, behind Assassin's Creed, dies at 69

PARIS, 21 JUNE

Claude Guillemot, founder of Ubisoft, the studio behind Assassin's Creed, was reportedly killed in a plane crash in western France. Authorities confirmed Guillemot and a flight instructor were flying a twin-motor Cessna 421 near La Baule airport on Friday evening when it crashed. Both were licensed and experienced pilots. Ubisoft said, "We are deeply saddened to learn of the death of Claude Guillemot, co-founder of the group and chairman of Guillemot Corp, in an accident. Our thoughts are with his family and loved ones during this difficult time. No further statements will be made at this time." Born 30 October, 1956, 69-year-old Claude helped grow Ubisoft from a mail-order software business. —AGENCIES

Starmer may quit today as Burnham supporters surge

LONDON, 21 JUNE

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer is likely to announce his resignation on Monday and outline a timetable for stepping down, according to media reports. The development comes shortly after Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham won the recent Makerfield special election and secured backing from several Labour MPs and party figures to succeed Starmer.

According to The Observer, Starmer was discussing his future with his wife at his Chequers country residence before taking a final decision. Senior Labour leaders are also reportedly preparing for a possible leadership change.

However, a government source rejected the speculation, saying Starmer "remained focused on getting

on with the job of governing".

Starmer has repeatedly insisted he intends to stay on. "I was elected with a considerable mandate to serve the country at a general election two years ago," he told reporters on Saturday. "There isn't a leadership contest at the moment. I don't think that's a good thing for the country to plunge us into chaos."

If he decides to resign, Starmer could remain Prime Minister during a transition period before handing power to a new Labour leader. Another possibility is that he steps down immediately, with a Cabinet member serving in a caretaker role until a leadership election is completed.

Potential contenders, including former health secretary Wes Streeting, would need backing from at least 20 per cent of Labour MPs and either 5 per cent of constituency Labour parties or at least three affiliated Labour organisations or trade unions.

Burnham has described the situation as the "last chance for change" and called for an end to "trickle-down economics", which he said "didn't trickle down very much at all". —*Agencies*

Scottish man stabs 5 Muslims in 'racial attack'

LONDON, 21 JUNE

A 36-year-old white Scottish man was charged for allegedly stabbing five Muslims in the capital Edinburgh, which British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said "motivated by anti-Muslim hatred".

Police said that five men – two aged 22, and others ages 24, 27 and 39 – sustained a range of injuries and three needed hospital treatment. None of the injuries is considered life-threatening. Two of them were stabbed just after attending prayers at a mosque.

Social media footage depicted a topless man carrying a large knife and appearing to target a shop front.

"Absolutely appalling. No one should face violence on our streets," Starmer posted. "I will not tolerate this – he will face the full force of the law. My thoughts are with those who are injured and I thank the police and the emer-

gency services for their response."

The First Minister of Scotland's devolved government, John Swinney, also said, "there is no place for violence, racism or intolerance in our country."

The UK has been seeing an upswing of racial-motivated crimes recently. —*PTI*

Colombians vote in crucial presidential runoff

BOGOTA, 21 JUNE

A deeply divided electorate will choose Colombia's next president in a runoff on Sunday that pits a progressive against a conservative outsider.

Voters will choose between businessman and lawyer Abelardo de la Espriella and Ivan Cepeda, a lawmaker and heir to the political movement of outgoing President Gustavo Petro, the nation's first leftist leader.

De la Espriella is proposing a heavy-handed approach that has earned him the endorsement of US President Donald Trump. A political newcomer nicknamed "The Tiger," he has promised to fiercely go after criminals and build 10 mega-prisons.

Cepeda is promising to continue Petro's efforts, including attempts at establishing dialogue with multiple illegal armed groups and negotiating pacts with guerrillas and criminal gangs.

Both are pitching strategies that they say will prevent the South American country from experiencing the nonstop merciless violence, such as car bombs, kidnappings, disappearances and forced displacements that Colombians lived with in previous decades.

In the first round, Cepeda earned 41 per cent of the vote, while de la Espriella garnered 44 per cent, according to official results. —*PTI*

In 1st foreign trip, PM Tarique to visit China & Malaysia

DHAKA, 21 JUNE

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will undertake his first overseas visit since assuming office, travelling to Malaysia and China, the Foreign Office announced. Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam said Rahman will depart for Kuala Lumpur on Sunday at the invitation of Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

During his two-day Malaysian visit, Bangladesh aims to seek support to become a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN and join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The focus will be on cooperation in trade, investment, energy, and labour markets, with Bangladesh urging ASEAN members, including Malaysia, to actively support the repatriation of Rohingyas from Myanmar.

Rahman will then visit China for four days from 23 June, upon Chinese Premier Li Qiang's invitation. Bangladesh and China are expected to sign 15 to 17 bilateral agreements. Discussions will include the Teesta project, linked to regional water-sharing and Chinese participation. He will meet President Xi Jinping, and attend the Summer Davos Forum in Dalian. —*PTI*

PPP names CM candidate for Pak occupied Gilgit-Baltistan

ISLAMABAD, 21 JUNE

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has announced its candidate for the chief ministership in Gilgit-Baltistan, days after becoming the region's largest party in elections. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari nominated lawyer Amjad Hussain for the post, stating, "Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has decided to appoint PPP's provincial president, Advocate Amjad Hussain, as the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan."

The PPP further said, "The chairman issued instructions to Advocate Amjad regarding government formation and the implementation of the constitutional and economic rights of the people." Hussain served as a member of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly from 2020 to 2025 and was part of the legislative council from 2009 to 2014.

The Dawn newspaper reported that the PPP will form a government with support from PML-N under a power-sharing agreement, mirroring federal arrangements. Under this, the chief minister will be from the PPP, with the governor and opposition leader from PML-N, and the post of deputy speaker also allocated to PML-N. The decision received endorsement from PML-N regional chief Hafeez Hafeezur Rehman. —*PTI*

Ukraine said it targetted an oil depot in Crimea as well as oil transport facilities in Russia, on Sunday —X@@ZELENSKYYUA

RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED CRIMEA STOPS FUEL SALES AMID UKRAINE STRIKES

MOSCOW, 21 JUNE

Officials in Russia-occupied Crimea suspended civilian gasoline sales Sunday as Ukraine ramped up attacks on fuel supplies on the Black Sea peninsula.

Gov Sergey Aksyonov, the Kremlin-appointed head of Crimea, said that overnight Ukrainian strikes killed four people and wounded 28 others. He said that local gas stations would halt all sales to non-state companies and individuals for an undefined period.

"Fuel will be sold only to government agencies that ensure the functioning and security of the Republic of Crimea," Aksyonov said. "I ask everyone to remain calm and to only trust official sources of information."

Ukraine has repeatedly targeted fuel supplies in Crimea recently, triggering the worst energy crisis in the region since it was annexed by Russia in 2014.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a statement on Sunday that a Crimean oil depot, as well as an oil transport facility in Russia's southern Krasnodar region were among the targets. "Russia understands only strength, and our long-range strength is certainly working for peace".

Zelenskyy stated that Russia had killed at least seven civilians in Ukraine the previous day. —*PTI*

China using hybrid warfare, warns Taiwan

TAIPEI, 21 JUNE

China is increasingly using "hybrid warfare" tactics to intensify pressure on Taiwan, relying on coast guard deployments, research vessels and legal manoeuvres rather than direct military confrontation, according to a senior Taiwanese security official.

Taiwan National Security Institute Deputy Secretary-General Ho Cheng-hui said Beijing is expanding grey-zone operations as conflicts in Ukraine and Iran appear to be easing, reducing the attractiveness of outright military action. Speaking to The Taipei Times, Ho said China is combining sovereignty claims, maritime power displays and coordinated propaganda campaigns to influence public opinion and exert pressure on Taiwan, Japan and the Philippines.

He warned that Beijing is exploiting ambiguities in international law to justify increasingly assertive actions in disputed waters. Potential flashpoints include Taiwan's exclusive economic zones, the median line in the Taiwan Strait, and waters around Kinmen and Matsu islands. China's coast guard, he said, has become a key instrument in challenging established maritime norms.

Ho urged Taiwan to adopt a more proactive response, citing the Philippines' policy of "absolute transparency" in publicising Chinese maritime incursions. He suggested live-streaming coast guard patrols around Taiwan's outlying islands to counter misinformation. —*ANI*

TO RESHAPE PUBLIC OPINION

Trump asks Americans to vote for rebranding 'ICE' to 'NICE'

WASHINGTON, 21 JUNE

US President Donald Trump has floated the idea of renaming Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to "NICE", saying the change would be part of a public poll and could help reshape perceptions of the agency amid ongoing debate over illegal immigration policies by his administration.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said he has long considered the idea of rebranding the agency by adding an "N", which he said would stand for "National".

"POLL: ICE has been abused by the Fake News Media at levels never seen before. They are great patriots who work hard," Trump wrote, adding that much of the criticism is driven by Democrats and media outlets.

He suggested that renaming the agency to "NICE" would "totally discombobulate" journalists and change public perception of enforcement operations.

"For them to say, 'We went to a NICE Facility today,' as opposed to 'ICE' or, 'NICE Agents have deported a Violent Drug Dealer,' they won't be able to handle it, they will go totally crazy!" he stated.

Trump said that the idea had been discussed with Border Czar Tom Homan, but officials weren't too keen on the change. — *ANI*

India boosts Russia, UAE oil purchases in June

This comes amid anticipation over the Hormuz opening

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

India imported an average of 2.66 million barrels per day of crude oil from Russia –PTI

India's crude oil imports from Russia surged in June, while shipments from the United Arab Emirates were near-record levels as refiners sought to secure supplies ahead of the full restoration of flows from Gulf producers following the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, intelligence firm Kpler said.

India imported an average of 2.66 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil from Russia in June — through 19 June — up from 1.91 million bpd in May, cementing Moscow's position as the country's largest oil supplier.

Imports from the UAE stood at 6,36,000 bpd in June, through 19 June, marginally below the record 6,44,000 bpd imported in May, while Venezuela emerged as India's fourth-largest crude supplier with shipments of 2,09,000 bpd, behind Saudi Arabia's 384,000 bpd.

Meanwhile, imports from the US fell sharply to 91,000 bpd from 2,52,000 bpd in May, according to Kpler data.

The purchases underscore India's strategy of diversifying its sourcing, with Russian barrels remaining attractive due to discounts, while UAE supplies help offset uncertainty surrounding shipments through the Strait of Hormuz.

India, the world's third-largest energy importer, relies heavily on Gulf oil and gas. Supplies were hit after Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, a key route carrying about 20 per cent of global oil and major exports from Gulf producers.

Oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz began recovering late last week after the US and Iran agreed to a ceasefire. However, the truce remains fragile, with Iranian authorities accusing Israel of violating the agreement, raising concerns over the durability of the reopening.

The impact of the disruption to the Strait of Hormuz varied sharply across fuels, with LPG emerging as the most affected commodity, while crude and LNG imports proved relatively resilient due to alternative sourcing and bypass infrastructure.

The reopening of Hormuz is expected to ease freight costs, reduce supply risks and moderate global energy prices, though a full return to normal trade may take weeks or months as shippers, insurers and traders regain confidence in the route.. —*PTI*

POSITIVE INVESTOR SENTIMENT

Easing West Asia tensions boost IPO activity

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The primary market is showing signs of revival as improving geopolitical conditions in West Asia have boosted investor sentiment, prompting three mainboard IPO launches next week.

NSE and Jio Platforms filed draft papers with Sebi last week, adding to the pipeline.

Zepto is targeting a Rs 10,000-crore-plus issue, while SBI Mutual Fund plans a Rs 13,000-crore IPO next month, sources said.

In June, CMR Green Technologies and Hexagon Nutrition have already launched their IPOs, while Turtlemint Fintech Solutions' issue is currently underway.

Waterways Leisure Tourism, Advit Jewels, and CSM Technologies will launch their maiden public issues over the next few days, while Knack Packaging is expected to announce its price band.

Waterways Leisure Tourism has fixed a price band of Rs 769-808 per share for its Rs 585-crore IPO, open from June 23-25.

The fresh issue proceeds will go towards lease payments of subsidiary Baycruise Shipping and Leasing and general corporate purposes.

Advit Jewels will open its Rs 165.16-crore IPO on June 23, with a price band of Rs 130-138 per share. Proceeds from the fresh issue of 1.20 crore shares are earmarked for debt repayment (Rs 65 crore), working capital, and general purposes.

CSM Technologies has fixed a price band of Rs 107-113 per share for its Rs 146-crore IPO, open from June 24-27, according to the draft papers. Funds will go towards working capital, debt repayment, acquisitions, and general corporate purposes.

Knack Packaging is expected to announce its price band next week. The issue comprises a fresh issue worth Rs 475 crore and an offer-for-sale of 70 lakh shares by promoters and an existing shareholder, according to the draft papers.

According to Equirus Capital, 23 companies have raised over Rs 27,000 crore via IPOs in 2026 despite market volatility and macroeconomic uncertainty.

The pipeline remains robust, with 236 mainboard draft papers pending, 163 with valid Sebi observations and 73 awaiting regulatory clearance as of May. —*PTI*

India-EU trade pact to be signed by Dec

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Union Minister Piyush Goyal –PTI

India and the 27-nation European Union are set to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) by December, with implementation expected between February and March next year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced on Sunday. Speaking during an interaction with chartered accountants in Mumbai, Goyal said, "Now, with almost zero duty, almost the entire European market will be open for us.

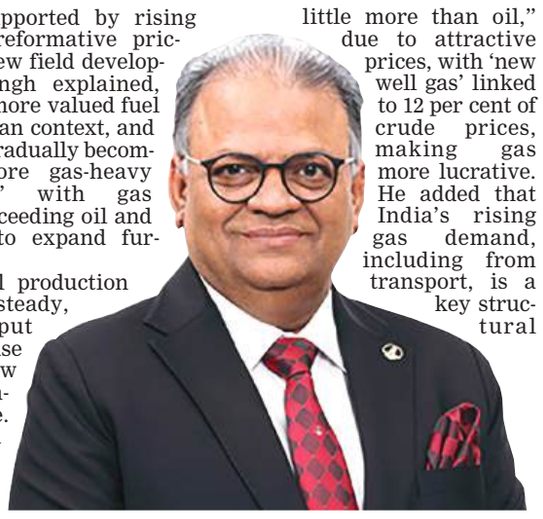
The EU's FTA will be signed by December and will be effective by February-March." He also mentioned that his US Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer, is visiting India this week to discuss the trade pact. Goyal added, "The whole world is looking towards India." Under the FTA, about 93 per cent of Indian shipments will enjoy duty-free access to the EU, while imports of luxury cars and wines from Europe will become less expensive.

The EU and India together account for 25 per cent of global GDP and approximately USD 11 trillion of international trade. Goyal also noted that during the G7 Summit in France, Canada expressed a desire to conclude a proposed free trade agreement with India this year. . —*PTI*

GAS POWERHOUSE

ONGC is now a 'gas-and-oil' company

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE



- Arun Kumar Singh said, "We should call ourselves a gas and oil company, not oil and gas," noting that gas is emerging as the main growth driver, supported by rising demand.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is increasingly being recognised as a 'gas-and-oil' firm, rather than an oil-and-gas producer, its Chairman **Arun Kumar Singh** stated, highlighting a strategic shift as natural gas output overtakes crude oil.

Singh told analysts, "Gas is now slightly more than oil in our portfolio," adding that future growth will be largely driven by gas, with crude production remaining flat without major discoveries.

He emphasised, "We should call ourselves a gas and oil company, not an oil and gas company," noting that gas is emerging as the main growth driver, supported by rising demand, reformative pricing, and new field developments. Singh explained, "Gas is a more valued fuel in the Indian context, and ONGC is gradually becoming a more gas-heavy company," with gas already exceeding oil and expected to expand further.

While oil production remains steady, gas output will increase with new fields coming online. Singh highlighted, "Gas is now a little more than oil," due to attractive prices, with 'new well gas' linked to 12 per cent of crude prices, making gas more lucrative. He added that India's rising gas demand, including from transport, is a key structural factor.

ONGC expects annual gas production growth of 7-8 per cent, supported by new offshore projects. The company is investing Rs 33,000 crore in offshore developments and aims to sustain and grow output, with overseas projects in Russia, Mozambique, and Venezuela progressing. —*PTI*

English Oven, Storia fined over food label

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has fined Storia Foods and Beverages Pvt Ltd and Mrs Bectors Food Specialities Ltd, maker of English Oven bread, Rs 1 lakh each for misleading using the term "100 per cent" on food products that did not meet claims.

Both companies were instructed to remove the claims from packaging, websites, and digital platforms.

The CCPA stated that "The expression '100 per cent' is a precise and absolute," adding that any claim must match the actual product content.

Investigators found that products claiming "100 per cent Tender Coconut Water" and "100 per cent Atta Bread" contained reconstituted ingredients and only 87 per cent whole wheat flour, respectively.

The authority rejected the companies' defence, emphasising that claims must be truthful, and non-deceptive under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and the Prevention of Misleading Advertisements, 2022. —*PTI*

Hyderabad first in India to host global aerospace testing symposium

HYDERABAD, 21 JUNE

Hyderabad will host the 15th International Symposium on Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) in Aerospace alongside NDE 2026 in November next year, marking the first for India. The symposium will bring together experts from over 20 countries, global aerospace firms, and 150 exhibitors as India aims to bolster its aerospace and defence manufacturing sector.

At an Indian Society for Non-Destructive Testing event, experts highlighted the growing importance of testing and quality assurance in supporting India's ambitions to become a global manufacturing and export hub.

BrahMos Aerospace Chief **Dr Jaiteerth Joshi** said Hyderabad was chosen as it is a major defence and aerospace centre.

He stated, "More than 20 countries have committed their participation," adding that experts, researchers, academicians, and industry leaders from around the world are expected to attend.

Dr M Phani Surya Kiran from DRDO noted the event would showcase state-of-the-art technologies across sectors including aerospace, atomic, and wind energy. —*PTI*

ADB to give $1B for India's dvpt

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

India continues to be the largest market for the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) private sector operations, with the multilateral lender expecting to provide about USD 1 billion in direct financing this year to the country's development.

"Last year, we did more than USD 4 billion for sovereign and more than USD 1 billion for the private sector from our own capital," ADB VP Bhargav Dasgupta said.

Besides, he said, "We mobilised an equal amount for them from other sources. In effect, the flow was USD 2 billion to private sectors in 2025".

The Manila-based ADB will continue financing clean energy, green hydrogen, e-mobility and green data centres, while also focusing on urban infrastructure, sustainable agriculture and financial inclusion.

"This is in alignment with what the Government of India wants because our... agenda is co-created with the government," he said.

Last month, ADB and Standard Chartered Bank signed risk-sharing agreements to boost supply chain finance, covering USD transactions via GIFT City and onshore INR transactions.

A key feature of the partnership is its focus on distributor financing, an underserved segment of supply chain finance — and ADB's first engagement in this space within the market. —*PTI*

60% PROFESSIONALS SAY AI CENTRAL TO HR OPERATIONS

MUMBAI, 21 JUNE

A survey-based report reveals that 60 per cent of HR professionals consider artificial intelligence (AI) now a top focus across HR functions, with an additional 15 per cent recognising its growing importance in recruitment, onboarding, and other HR operations. The 'AI As The New HR Priority – Efficiency, Cost and Workforce Impact' report is based on a survey of 1,811 HR professionals conducted between 7 and 31 May, by Genius HRTech DigiPoll.

The survey shows that 60 per cent see improving efficiency and productivity as the main reason for AI adoption, followed by 20 per cent who aim to reduce costs and optimise workforce management. The report highlights AI's transformative impact, with 42 per cent noting significant improvements in HR process speed, and 29 per cent observing moderate gains.

It also indicates that AI is reducing reliance on manual roles and enabling smarter workforce planning. "Successful AI adoption is not about replacing people, it is about empowering them," said RP Yadav, Chairman of Genius HRTech. —*PTI*

MCap of top 9 firms jumps Rs 2.15 lakh cr

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms jumped by Rs 2.15 lakh crore last week, in line with improving global risk sentiment.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm. Airtel was the biggest winner. Followed by HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, LIC and Hindustan Unilever.

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel surged by Rs 52,432.67 crore to Rs 11,62,963.30 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. Life Insurance Corporation of India added Rs 51,675.23 crore to Rs 5,56,726.30 crore. Bajaj Finance soared by Rs 26,553.71 crore to Rs 5,98,501.25 crore and Reliance Industries jumped by Rs 22,464.02 crore to Rs 17,71,882.96 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Larsen & Toubro climbed Rs 21,929.12 crore to Rs 5,79,126.95 crore, and that of State Bank of India rallied Rs 16,753.57 crore to Rs 9,55,415.07 crore. HDFC Bank edged higher by Rs 11,948.72 crore to Rs 12,01,263.14 crore, and Hindustan Unilever advanced by Rs 6,661.1 crore to Rs 5,15,946.75 crore. ICICI Bank rose by Rs 4,724.22 crore to Rs 9,66,021.99 crore.

However, the value of TCS fell by Rs 12,699.49 crore to Rs 7,69,350.13 crore. W —*PTI*

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel surged by Rs 52,432 crore to Rs 11,62,963 crore—the most among the top 10 firms –ANI

US TARIFF EXPIRES SOON

'India, US to hold ministerial-level trade pact talks this week'

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and India's Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will hold the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement this week.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said the two-day meeting between the two ministers is expected to focus on finalising the framework deal.

The meeting followed chief negotiator-level discussions on the pact held earlier this month (June 2-4) in Delhi.

The 10 per cent temporary tariff the US imposed on all trading partners on 24 February will expire on 24 July, after 150 days. Once it lapses, MFN (most favoured nation) tariffs, Washington has until 24 July to put a new tariff regime in place. For that, the US is conducting two Section 301 investigations against a number of countries, including India.

This is the only legal mechanism through which the US can impose new tariffs of any magnitude.

India US to hold ministerial-level talks on bilateral trade pact this week –PTI

- Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said the two-day meeting between the two ministers is expected to focus on finalising the trade deal framework.

In March, the US Trade Representative (USTR) launched two Section 301 investigations against India and other nations over excess capacity and forced labour.

On 2 June, the USTR proposed a 12.5 per cent tariff on 54 countries, including India, for forced labour failures. The proposal is not yet finalised; however, hearings are scheduled for 7 July, with a second probe report still awaited.

On 7 February, India and the US established a framework for an interim trade deal, where the US agreed to cut tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent. However, a US Supreme Court ruling struck down these tariffs, prompting both nations to renegotiate the agreement.

Under the original framework, India proposed reducing tariffs on US industrial, agricultural, and food products, alongside plans to purchase USD 500 billion in US energy, tech, and aircraft products over the next five years. —*PTI*

UEDA SCORES TWICE IN JAPAN'S 4-0 WIN AGAINST TUNISIA

Japan scored their most goals ever in WC

MONTERREY, 21 JUNE

Japan moved one step closer to reaching the knockout stages of the World Cup for the fourth consecutive time after pummeling Tunisia 4-0 in Group F, securing a milestone victory in the tournament's 1,000th men's match.

Japan's four goals were the most the Samurai Blue have ever scored in a World Cup game, as it comfortably dismantled a Tunisia side that became the first to ever fire its coach after the opening match.

Ayase Ueda scored twice, along with Daichi Kamada and Junya Ito to put Japan level with the Netherlands on four points. The Dutch are currently on top of the group due to having scored one more goal than Japan across its two matches.

Even after leading 2-0 just over half an hour into the match, Japan continued to apply pressure to a disjointed Tunisian defence.

The loss for Tunisia means it is eliminated from the tournament. Japan is guaranteed at least third in the group, which could be enough to advance to the knockout stages.

Tunisia appointed two-time Africa Cup of Nations winner Hervé Renard to try and rescue the Eagles of Carthage after its humiliating 5-1 loss to Sweden, but the North African nation could not contain Japan's speedy attack nor create any clear chances of their own.

Kamada opened the scoring in the fourth minute, the fastest in Japan's World Cup history. The Crystal Palace midfielder, who acted as a "shadow striker", was perfectly positioned for Keito Nakamura's cross and barely had to move to tap in his second goal of the tournament.

In the 69th minute, Ueda's flick put Junya Ito into a one-on-one with Tunisia's goalkeeper Aymen Dahmen, which he slotted calmly for Japan's third goal.

Japan, which has not lost to a European opponent in 90 minutes since 2019, will play against Sweden in Dallas on Thursday. Tunisia will play the Netherlands in Kansas City at the same time. *—PTI*

Make some room for Curacao's Room

KANSAS CITY, 21 JUNE

Curacao better make some room for a new national hero.

Eloy Room delivered for his tiny Caribbean nation one of the finest performances in World Cup history on Saturday night, making 15 saves against a relentless Ecuador attack and helping The Blue Wave earn its first-ever point with a 0-0 draw against La Tri.

The outcome also allowed Germany, which beat Ivory Coast earlier in the day, to clinch Group E.

Room, who plays for USL Championship club Miami FC, said, "You don't think about it when you do it but of course it's going to be something you look back to. For me as a goalkeeper, this is almost a perfect game."

The 37-year-old Room, whose shutout of Jamaica last November sent Curacao to its first World Cup, bounced back in historic fashion from a 7-1 loss to Germany. His save total was one shy of the record — since saves became an official stat in 1966 — of 16 set by Tim Howard of the US against Belgium on 1 July, 2014, in a game that Room remembers watching.

Howard needed 120 minutes for his total, though. Nobody has made more saves than Room without extra time.

"I think I need a statue in Curacao now," he said with a smile.

Ecuador certainly had a home-field advantage Saturday night at the home of the Kansas City Chiefs. Its fanbase, dressed like its players in bright yellow shirts, filled the stadium to the brim, making it look like a convention of Minions. There was only a couple of small pockets of blue-clad Curacao fans. *—PTI*

Norway says no to US grub, ships 500kg of seafood

Norway's football team has packed a taste of home for its first FIFA World Cup appearance in nearly three decades, shipping around 500 kg of seafood to its training base in the US.

The consignment includes salmon, trout, Arctic char, halibut, king crab, snow crab and langoustines, along with 116 kg of Norway's traditional brown cheese, known as brunost, and 6,000 oranges. Team chef Aron Espeland, who has travelled with the team for 35 years, said familiar food plays a crucial role in keeping players match-ready.

This has been done to avoid the risk of upset stomachs that can come with a dramatic change in diet. Norway marked its return to the World Cup — its first since 1998 — with a convincing 4-1 victory over Iraq and will next face Senegal in Group I. *—PTI*

Undav saves Germany with 2-1 win over Ivory Coast

TORONTO, 21 JUNE

Deniz Undav scored twice after being subbed on in the second half as Germany defeated Ivory Coast 2-1 on Saturday and clinched a spot in the knockout phase at the World Cup.

Four minutes into stoppage time, Undav received a pass from Felix Nmecha in front of the net and rifled it past Ivory Coast goalkeeper Yahia Fofana to give the Germans a comeback win.

Undav's first goal of the match came after Nadiem Amiri sent in a long ball – that striker Kai Havertz let pass him by – onto the boot of Undav, who slammed it into the back of the net at the 68th minute. Both Amiri and Undav had subbed on eight minutes earlier.

Four-time champion Germany has come back from disappointing group stage exits in 2018 and 2022, while Ivory Coast is still searching for its first knockout stage appearance and could still qualify.

The last time Germany got past the group stage it won the tournament in 2014.

Ivory Coast captain Franck Kessie opened the scoring in the 30th minute after midfielder Yan Diomande sent in a cross to forward Amad Diallo. His shot was blocked by Germany's Nathaniel Brown, but the ball bounced back to Kessie, who slotted it in the wide-open left corner of the net. *—PTI*

Germany's Deniz Undav (26) is embraced by teammates after scoring their second goal during the World Cup Group E soccer match between Germany and Ivory Coast in Toronto ***—PTI***

Raphinha to undergo treatment for hamstring

Brazil forward Raphinha will undergo treatment on a hamstring injury with the hope of him returning to the World Cup, the country's national team said on Saturday.

Raphinha left late in the first half of the team's win over Haiti on Friday night in Philadelphia after receiving medical attention.

The Brazilian soccer confederation said afterward that the 29-year-old felt something in his right hamstring and would undergo further tests. Brazil, which is unbeaten in two games so far, plays Scotland on Wednesday in Miami Gardens, Florida, in each team's group play finale. *—PTI*

—WIKIPEDIA

Kohli named in India ODI squad for England tour

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

Star batter Virat Kohli was on Sunday named in India's squad for the three-match ODI series against England next month, subject to fitness clearance, as the BCCI announced a 15-man squad for the upcoming white-ball assignment.Kohli, who is in Delhi for a promotional event, will report to the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru on Monday for a fitness test. He had suffered a hamstring injury during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's title-defending run in Indian Premier League. The injury had ruled him out of the recent three-match ODI series against Afghanistan. Pacer Jasprit Bumrah has also been called back to the squad after being rested for workload management. Also making a comeback is veteran all rounder Axar Patel, who replaced rookie left arm spinner Harsh Dubey. Meanwhile spinner Varun Chakravarthy has been dropped from the T20I squad for the Ireland series as he is yet to recover from his foot injury. ***—PTI***

Sooryavanshi hits fastest 50 in List A at just 11 balls

His 94 powers India A to 377/9 against Lanka A

DAMBULLA, 21 JUNE

Teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi shrugged off his lean run in the league stage with a breathtaking 29-ball 94, which also included the fastest fifty in List A cricket, to help India A post a mammoth 377/9 against Sri Lanka A in the tri-series final here on Sunday.

Asked to bat, India A looked set for a score in excess of 400 riding on Sooryavanshi's extraordinary blitz before Sri Lanka A clawed their way back in the middle overs.

Skipper Tilak Varma steadied the innings with a composed 67 off 90 balls, while Anukul Roy (39 off 15) and Vipraj Nigam (27 off 20) produced a late burst to lift India beyond the 350-run mark.

The day, however, belonged to Sooryavanshi.

The 15-year-old from Bihar's Samastipur needed just 11 deliveries to reach his half-century, eclipsing the 21-year-old record held by Sri Lankan Kaushalya Weeraratne, who had taken 12 balls to get to the milestone in 2005.

Having endured a modest run in the series, Sooryavanshi walked out with clear intent and unleashed absolute carnage. His first 11 deliveries yielded 50 runs, reading 4, 4, 4, 6, 6, 0, 6, 4, 4, 6, 6, as he dismantled the Sri Lankan attack from the outset.

He reached the landmark with five sixes and as many boundaries, bringing up the record with successive sixes straight down the ground off pacer Dulaj Samuditha.

The left-hander combined brute force with exceptional timing. His ability to dispatch even good deliveries over the ropes once again stood out.

Alongside Priyansh Arya (39), Sooryavanshi added 132 runs for the opening wicket and looked well on course to register the fastest century in List A cricket. Ruturaj Gaikwad (40) and Tilak then added 63 runs for the third wicket, but the flow of boundaries dried up considerably.

As India attempted to accelerate in the closing stages, wickets fell at regular intervals, but Nigam and Anukul provided the final flourish. *—PTI*

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi plays a shot during the fifth match between India A and Afghanistan A in the Tri-Nation A Series, in Dambulla, Sri Lanka***—PTI***

IN CZECHIA

India boxers punch their way to 12-medal haul

Lovlina Borgohain, Jadumani singh and Preeti Pawar***—ANI***

NEW DELHI, 21 JUNE

India's Commonwealth Games-bound boxers finished with a rich haul of 12 medals, including eight golds, capping off a commanding display at the invitational 56th Grand Prix Usti nad Labem in Czechia.

The five-member women's team won four golds and one silver. Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg), reigning Asian champion Preeti Pawar (54kg), Sakshi Chaudhary (51kg) and Priya Ghanghas (60kg) all struck gold. Parveen Hooda (65kg) added a silver medal.

The men's team matched with four gold medals. Jadumani Singh (55kg), Sachin (60kg), Ankush (80kg) and Narender (+90kg) emerged champions in their respective categories.

Lovlina defeated Italy's Melissa Gemini 5-0 in the final, while Preeti outclassed France's Jeyssa Marcel by a similar margin. Sakshi beat France's Mayssoun Bourega 5-0 and Priya secured a dominant win over home favourite Barbora Maxova of Czechia.

Jadumani defeated England's Abdul Burton 4-1 in the final, while Sachin and Ankush registered comprehensive 5-0 victories over Hungary's Veres Rohland and Czech Republic's Florian Daniel respectively.

Narender edged past Armenia's Davit Chaloyan 3-2 in a closely fought heavyweight final. *—PTI*

India beat NZ to win FIH women's Nations Cup

AUCKLAND, 21 JUNE

Continuing their impressive run of form, India defeated hosts New Zealand 2-0 in the final to win their second FIH Women's Nations Cup title and secured promotion to the FIH Women's Pro League here on Sunday.

Navneet Kaur (4') gave India the early lead before Sunelita Toppo (15') doubled India's advantage. The team produced a stellar defensive display to win the title.

Lalremsiami won the 'Player of the Match' award in the final, while Deepika finished as the joint-top scorer in the tournament with six goals to her name – sharing the honours with USA's Ashley Sessa.

This is India's second Nations Cup title, having won the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2022.

India remained unbeaten throughout their campaign, defeating USA (3-2), Japan (2-1), and Uruguay (3-2) in the Pool A matches, before registering a commanding 6-0 win over Chile in the semi-final.

To recognise the teams' achievements, Hockey India announced a cash award of Rs 3 lakh for each player and Rs 1.5 lakh for each member of the support staff.

India remained resolute in the third quarter, putting up a remarkable defensive display that kept the hosts at bay. *—PTI*